



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department
Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick
Press Release**

Contact: Heather Nichols, Bonnie McGilpin, Juli Hanscom – 617-725-4025;
Matt McKenna (DVS) – 617-210-5761

Follow us on [Twitter](#) – View our [Photos](#) – Watch our [Videos](#)

**GOVERNOR PATRICK SIGNS VALOR ACT II,
ENSURING CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR
MASSACHUSETTS VETERANS**



Wednesday, April 9, 2014 - Governor Patrick hosts a ceremonial bill signing for S. 1878, "An Act Relative to Veterans'

Allowances, Labor, Outreach and Recognition" in room 157 of the State House.

BOSTON – Wednesday, April 9, 2014 – Governor Deval Patrick today held a ceremonial bill signing for S. 1878, "An Act Relative to Veterans' Allowances, Labor, Outreach and Recognition," also known as the "VALOR Act II," underscoring the Patrick Administration's continued commitment to Massachusetts veterans and their families. The legislation creates increased supports for workforce training for veterans, continued access to veterans' services and increased protections for servicemen and women

seeking higher education in the Commonwealth. The VALOR Act II was signed into law by the Governor on Thursday, April 3, 2014.

“I am proud to sign the VALOR Act II to further enhance our strong supports for the Commonwealth’s veterans,” said Governor Patrick. “Massachusetts leads the nation in providing services for veterans and their families, and this legislation reinforces our commitment to making opportunities and resources available to the Massachusetts men and women who have served, and continue to serve us.”

VALOR Act II provides \$350,000 for the training and certification of veterans’ services officers through the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS) and will allow DVS to develop training and guidelines to ensure the Commonwealth has trained and qualified veterans’ advocates at the community level. The Act will also ensure municipal compliance with Chapter 115 so that all Massachusetts veterans have access to the highest quality assistance regardless of where they live. Chapter 115 is a state law requiring that all cities and towns in the Commonwealth provide local veterans agents to serve as community advocates, but also to administer the financial benefits available to veterans and their family members. Those eligible can receive financial assistance for food, shelter, clothing, housing supplies and medical care.

The Act also requires the Division of Professional Licensure to waive application fees for members of the armed forces for which the Division will accept education, training or service completed by the applicant toward qualification requirements to receive license or certification. The legislation also prohibits active military enrolled at public and private colleges and universities from academic or financial penalties by virtue of their service. A student who enrolls, but is unable to complete a course because he or she is called to active duty, can complete the course at a later date, or withdraw with a full refund of fees and tuition.

“I am proud of Massachusetts for continuing its tradition of leading the nation in supporting our veterans, military members and their families,” said Senate President Therese Murray. “It is our responsibility to ensure that these men and women have access to the best care and services, while on duty and when they return home, and we do this out of gratitude and respect for the sacrifices they make for our safety on a daily basis.”

“This legislation sends a message to our veterans that we appreciate their bravery, sacrifice and service,” said House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo. “Most importantly, it aids those who have supported America during some of the country’s most difficult times by providing resources to help them build a bright future. I’m incredibly proud that Massachusetts leads the nation in this regard and I thank the Patrick Administration, Senate President Murray, Chairman Basile and my colleagues in the Legislature for building on this tradition.”

“This is another historic piece of legislation here in the Commonwealth to support veterans and their families,” said Secretary of Veterans’ Services Coleman Nee. “The

certification and training language will allow the Commonwealth to ensure that our front-line resources, the municipal veterans' agents, are the finest trained and most knowledgeable veterans' advocates in the country. I thank the Governor and the Legislature for their work maintaining Massachusetts as the national leader in veterans' benefits and services."

VALOR Act II builds off record investments in veterans services made by the Patrick Administration. In 2012, Governor Patrick signed ["An Act Relative to Veterans' Access, Livelihood, Opportunity, and Resources", or the VALOR Act](#). Building upon the VALOR Act, which, in part, required certain areas of state government to establish military friendly practices for licensing, the Patrick Administration announced that all state agencies that oversee professional licensing within the Administration have [established guidelines](#) to assist members of the armed forces, veterans and their spouses as they prepare and apply for jobs in Massachusetts. The Patrick Administration then expanded this action to reach all relevant agencies within the Executive Branch. This component of the VALOR Act was inspired by a request from First Lady Michelle Obama and the Joining Forces Initiative to ensure that those who have served in the military have a streamlined and efficient process through which to obtain appropriate licensure for jobs when they are home. In 2013, Governor Patrick also signed [an executive order to help small businesses owned by disabled veterans](#) gain access to contracts for public projects in the areas of construction, design and goods and services procurement.

The Patrick Administration leads the nation in veteran services and continues to implement employment assistance and workforce training programs for members of the armed forces, veterans and their spouses. In 2011, the Administration launched an aggressive employment campaign focused on increasing the hiring of Massachusetts veterans. Among these initiatives, the Patrick Administration partnered with major trade associations to encourage them to hire veterans and circulate information on veterans' benefits. One example includes the Administration's partnership with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce to launch the "Boots to Business" program, which expands mentoring and networking opportunities and educates local employers about the skills service members gain in the military. Connecting veterans' initiatives with the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce was the first step of a statewide program designed to provide networking and mentoring opportunities for veterans of all generations. "Boots to Business" currently has over 30 mentors from local companies working with veterans.

To lead by example, Governor Patrick called for the establishment of an Interagency Taskforce on Hiring Veterans within the Executive Branch. The Secretary of Administration and Finance charged the head of the Human Resources Division along with Taskforce members to take a critical look at the Executive Branch's current policies, processes and practices on hiring veterans and recently completed this plan.

"With VALOR Act II, Massachusetts recognizes the enormous sacrifices that are made by our veterans and their families," said Senator Joan Lovely. "Our country and our Commonwealth are indebted to these service men and women, so it's important to

honor our veterans by expanding services and pursuing new initiatives to help them as best we can. ”

“We owe our veterans nothing but the best for their service,” said Representative Claire D. Cronin. “Veterans deserve to be at the top of our list of priorities. We must continue to ensure that we provide for our veterans and their families. This legislation honors and serves those who have sacrificed so much for us.”

“Massachusetts has long led the nation in recognizing and providing for veterans and their families. This bill continues our proud tradition by providing additional benefits to veterans, while also addressing concerns that the veterans’ community has brought to our attention,” said Representative Carolyn Dykema. “This legislation allows us as a Commonwealth to better fulfill our duty to support those who defend our freedoms and our way of life.”

“The Valor Act II is a sensible law that will improve the lives of Massachusetts veterans and their families,” said Representative Brian Mannel. “The law builds upon the original Valor Act, and will substantially improve veterans’ services in Massachusetts by addressing a broad range of veterans’ issues, from job training and education to affordable housing and the uniform provision of veterans’ services in the Commonwealth. Among other things, the law will double the size of buffer zones around military funerals to limit protests and will allow fallen soldiers to be buried in peace by their loved ones. The law will also allow soldiers who are called away on active duty while enrolled in college to delay their classes without penalty or receive a full refund if they withdraw. We need this law, and I am proud to say that I am a member of the committee that worked on it.”

“As a member of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs and one of ten veterans in the House and Senate, it makes me proud that Governor Patrick continues to lead the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in signing legislation that helps keep us #1 in the United States of America when it comes to providing our Veterans with services and benefits,” said Representative Dennis A. Rosa.

“I am proud to have been able to vote in favor of this legislation that supports those that have served our country as members of the greatest armed services in the world,” said Representative Walter Timilty. “Anytime that we, as a legislature and as a nation, have the opportunity to support our troops, we must do everything in our power to do so.”

More than 385,000 veterans currently live in Massachusetts, including 42,000 men and women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan since 9/11. The Patrick Administration has worked to ensure newly returning veterans, as well as Massachusetts’ aging veteran population, continue to receive quality health, housing and employment services to honor their service. To learn more about services for Massachusetts veterans, visit www.mass.gov/veterans.

###